

## **Leland Cheung – Response to A Better Cambridge Candidate Questionnaire**

**1. DIVERSITY: ABC is committed to strengthening the social, cultural, and economic diversity of our neighborhoods.**

*If elected, what policies will you support or propose to help strengthen the diversity of our community through increased affordable housing and greater economic opportunity for all residents?*

RESPONSE: It is essential that we ensure that Cambridge continues to be a community that people from all different backgrounds and walks of life can call home. To strengthen this diversity, we must implement creative housing strategies to increase low- and middle-income housing options without clustering based on socioeconomic class. Going forward, I support efforts to increase inclusionary zoning requirements to the maximum enforceable amount as indicated by Nexus studies as well as increasing funding to the Affordable Housing Trust through smart development. Additionally, I support expanding the amount and scope of current training programs offered to Cambridge's residents. In my last term, I co-sponsored an order asking the City Manager to explore the ways Cambridge can affiliate itself with Boston's Building Pathways Program, an apprenticeship program offering low-income residents training in building and construction trades, and intend to continue my work on this going forward.

**2. SUSTAINABILITY: ABC wants to build a strong and sustainable community where current and future residents will be able to work, shop, and play near their homes.**

*If elected, what policies or initiatives will you support to ensure that there is adequate housing near public transportation that supports sufficient retail to meet neighborhood needs, meets the needs of current and future residents, reduces auto usage and encourages energy efficiency?*

RESPONSE: It flies in the face of our expressed value of environmental sustainability to only have one-story buildings directly above any of our major underground transportation hubs. Going forward, I support proposals for zoning changes in Central Square that will allow the Square to grow while preserving its unique and vibrant spirit. This can be achieved by removing minimum parking requirements from new developments, making smart increases to density while still requiring a generous amount of retail frontage be reserved for locally-owned and independently-operated businesses and reducing the number of large banks on the street. We must increase the amount housing options near transit hubs, providing our community members with access to sustainable commuting options such as bus, T, or Hubway bike station (with real-time and clear signage) as well as open spaces to enjoy such as parks and plazas.

**3. GROWTH: ABC is working to preserve and expand the diversity of our community by supporting sustainable growth and appropriate density.**

*Do you agree that in order to support diversity and meet the housing needs of sustainable growth in Cambridge, increased density may be necessary? If elected, what specific policies or initiatives will you support to achieve sustainable urban growth and to increase low and moderate income housing for all populations, including families?*

RESPONSE: Absolutely. According to Barry Bluestone, housing price increases have been driven by extremely low vacancy rates – during high vacancies, prices drop, and during low vacancies, prices rise. Unlike the stock market, housing isn't a liquid market; people move when a life event necessitates it. It's essential that we create a comprehensive plan to add to our housing stock annually so that we can manage vacancy rates, stabilize prices, and increase subsidized housing. This will keep residents in Cambridge, allow new families to move in and ensure reasonable prices, but will ultimately require increased density. I support efforts to prioritize this smart growth, including by transforming city-owned parking lots into a healthy balance of mixed income housing (including both middle income and low/moderate income options with 2-3 bedroom family units); outdoor public space including pocket parks, play areas and plazas; and affordable retail and non-profit space for arts and culture.

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- 4. LIVABILITY: We want to reinforce the distinctive character of our neighborhoods, ensuring that new development builds upon and enhances their defining traits.**

What traits of Cambridge neighborhoods do you find most distinctive? If elected, what policies or initiatives will you support to help reinforce these characteristics through new development, public and open spaces and other means?

RESPONSE: What I love most about Cambridge is our unique sense of community –we’re a large city with the feel of a small town. One of the prime contributors to this feeling is the locally-owned businesses that shape the spirit of our squares and, ultimately, our city. To support our small business community, we need to ensure that they’re able to operate efficiently and encourage consumers to patron them. Many of Cambridge’s current regulations on small businesses are convoluted and burdensome, and I have put pressure on City departments to remove these archaic practices and hope to simplify zoning regulations going forward. Furthermore, we must drive customers to our distinctive neighborhoods and make our squares places where people can live, work, and play by pursuing smart development that increases housing, requires a significant portion of retail frontage be reserved only for locally-owned and independently-operated businesses, and draws attention to our neighborhoods.

- 5. DIALOGUE: We want to support open and constructive engagement between all parties to the planning process, based on mutual respect for differing views.**

In your opinion, do public planning processes in Cambridge support open and constructive engagement between stakeholders? If elected, how will you help ensure transparent and mutually respectful planning for the future of Cambridge?

RESPONSE: Although public planning processes in Cambridge do support open and constructive engagement between stakeholders, it often proves difficult to get all the players to the table at the same time. Our elected officials must be proactive in facilitating discussion amongst community groups, developers, and City staff. In my tenure on the Council, I have repeatedly brought these players together to discuss options for smart and sustainable growth that will allow us to maintain our community feel. As chair of the Neighborhood and Long Term Planning Committee, I leveraged my relationships with neighborhood groups, industry stakeholders, and City planners throughout a series of committee meetings about the future of Kendall Square. When residents expressed to me that they felt that the C2 Committee’s non-zoning recommendations weren’t receiving the appropriate amount of attention, I acted immediately, bringing the Community Development Department and surrounding neighborhoods together to determine which goals should be prioritized.

- 6. Earlier this year the Central Square and Kendall Square Advisory Committees (K2C2) proposed recommendations to guide the future development of these key residential and commercial districts in Cambridge.**

Which three K2C2 recommendations do you believe should be top priorities for the City of Cambridge over the next few years? What specific policies or initiatives recommended will you support to ensure these priorities are achieved during the next City Council term? Are there policies and recommendations that you oppose?

RESPONSE: The three K2C2 recommendations that I believe should be top priorities for Cambridge are:

1. Support a diverse community through more and varied housing choices.
2. Leverage community and innovation benefits of mixed-use environments.
3. Ensure positive relationship of new development to public space.

Going forward, I will support smart development that welcomes increased density in exchange for community benefits including affordable housing, locally-owned retail options, and mixed use space between entrepreneurs and non-profits. I believe this approach will support our expressed goals of environmental sustainability by strengthening neighborhoods around transit hubs and diversity by ensuring that people of all backgrounds and walks of life are able to call Cambridge home. We must balance this development with our desire to preserve open outdoor spaces for community use, including parklets, courtyards, and plazas.